

Compatibility Determination

Use: Motorized Watercraft Use

Refuge Name: Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing Authority: Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established May 3, 1944 under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 715d) and Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. § 460k-1).

Refuge Purposes:

- “...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” (16 U.S.C. § 715d),
- “... suitable for — incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development,”
- (16 U.S.C. § 460k-1),
- “the protection of natural resources,” (16 U.S.C. § 460k-1),
- “and the conservation of threatened or endangered species...” (16 U.S.C. § 460k-1)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Proposed Use:

(a) What is the use? Is the use a priority public use?

The use is motorized watercraft on certain refuge waters. Use of motorized watercraft is not a priority public use, but would be utilized in support of the priority public uses of fishing, waterfowl hunting, and wildlife observation and photography.

(b) Where would the use be conducted?

Motorboating would occur only on the Concord and Sudbury Rivers within and adjacent to the refuge boundary. Motorboating will not be allowed in refuge pools or wetlands.

(c) When would the use be conducted?

Use of motorized watercraft will occur primarily during the spring, summer, and fall. Use of motorized watercraft will be precluded during times when the river is frozen.

(d) How would the use be conducted?

Individuals will launch watercraft from a variety of formal and informal locations along the river. They will travel up and down the river on and off of refuge waters to participate in wildlife dependent activities.

(e) Why is this use being proposed?

Use of motorized watercraft at Great Meadows NWR will facilitate wildlife observation, waterfowl hunting, photography, and fishing.

Availability of Resources: The costs of facilities associated with facilitating motorized watercraft are discussed under the compatibility determinations for the respective wildlife dependent public uses. These costs are also included in Appendix E of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Great Meadows NWR. Facilities at Great Meadows NWR would not be used.

Anticipated Impacts on Refuge Purpose:

Use of motorized watercraft at Great Meadows NWR will be monitored to ensure the activity will not have adverse impact on wildlife habitat, or the management of migratory birds and other wildlife species. There is potential for wildlife disturbance due to noise of boat motors, proximity of boats to wildlife, speed of boats, and time of operation. This activity will facilitate wildlife-dependent recreation.

Public Review and Comment: The public review and comment period has been announced on refuge kiosks, in a planning update sent to all of the individuals on the CCP mailing list, and on the refuge website.

Determination:

Use is not compatible ____.

Use is Compatible with the following stipulations X.

The following stipulations are required to ensure compatibility: The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) allows refuge managers to authorize the use of watercraft in national wildlife refuges. The use of motorized watercraft could adversely impact waterfowl and resident wildlife if guidelines are not in place to ensure operation to minimize such impacts.

Historically, use of motorized watercraft has occurred up and down the Concord and Sudbury Rivers and the refuge is just one of the many landowners along the rivers. We have the responsibility of ensuring that all of the activities that take place within the refuge occur in a manner that is consistent with the purposes of the refuge. As such, we will review all of the areas of the rivers within and adjacent to the refuge and determine the maximum allowable speed. In no case will the speed limit exceed 25 miles per hour. We will review additional speed restrictions imposed by the towns that border or encompass the rivers and will respect any speed limits that are in place.

All of the provisions of 50 CFR §27.31 and 27.32 will be imposed as well. Included in this section is the requirement that “No operator or person in charge of any boat shall operate or knowingly permit any other person to operate a boat in a reckless manner, or in a manner so as to endanger or be likely to endanger any person, property or wildlife.”

Watercraft users will utilize only areas open to the public and not venture into closed areas. We do not provide areas for boat landing and access to the refuge lands from the river. Watercraft users are not allowed to tie off to shoreline vegetation or pull onto refuge lands to access trails.

Justification: The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-57) identifies six legitimate and appropriate uses of wildlife refuges; environmental education, interpretation, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and wildlife photography. These priority public uses are dependent upon healthy wildlife populations. Where these uses are determined to be compatible, they are to receive enhanced consideration over other uses in planning and management.

Use of motorized watercraft is to be used as a means to facilitate the priority public uses identified above.

These activities will not materially interfere with or detract from the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System or the purposes for which the refuge was established.

Signature - Refuge Manager: _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence - Regional Chief: _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Reevaluation Date: _____